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ABSTRACT

Linguistics gives the student of literature an analytical tool whose sole purpose is to describe faithfully the workings of language. It provides a theoretical framework, an analytical method, and a vocabulary for communicating its insights--all designed to serve concerns other than literary interpretation and evaluation, but all useful for determining how a work of literature achieves its effect. Through the varied perspectives of grammar, discourse analysis, phonology, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics, linguistics becomes an independent point of entry into the literary work. Linguistic analysis imposes a measure of objectivity on the reader's initial intuition, provides a means for articulating that intuition, and suggests directions to explore. (MSE)

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LINGUISTICS IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM

APPENDIX 4-D

Linguistics and the Study of Literature

by

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The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the LSA or the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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PREFACE

The Linguistics in the Undergraduate Curriculum (LUC) project is an effort by the Linguistic Society of America (LSA) to study the state of undergraduate instruction in linguistics in the United States and Canada and to suggest directions for its future development. It was supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities during the period 1 January 1985-31 December 1987. The project was carried out under the direction of D. Terence Langendoen, Principal Investigator, and Secretary-Treasurer of the LSA. Mary Niebuhr, Executive Assistant at the LSA office in Washington, DC, was responsible for the day-to-day administration of the project with the assistance of Nicole VandenHeuvel and Dana McDaniel.

Project oversight was provided by a Steering Committee that was appointed by the LSA Executive Committee in 1985. Its members were: Judith Aissen (University of California, Santa Cruz), Paul Angelis (Southern Illinois University), Victoria Fromkin (University of California, Los Angeles), Frank Heny, Robert Jeffers (Rutgers University), D. Terence Langendoen (Graduate Center of the City University of New York), Manjari Ohala (San Jose State University), Ellen Prince (University of Pennsylvania), and Arnold Zwicky (The Ohio State University and Stanford University). The Steering Committee, in turn, received help from a Consultant Panel, whose members were: Ed Battistella (University of Alabama, Birmingham), Byron Bender (University of Hawaii, Manoa), Garland Bills (University of New Mexico), Daniel Brink (Arizona State University), Ronald Butters (Duke University), Charles Cairns (Queens College of CUNY), Jean Casagrande (University of Florida), Nancy Dorian (Bryn Mawr College), Sheila Embleton (York University), Francine Frank (State University of New York, Albany), Robert Freidin (Princeton University), Jean Berko-Gleason (Boston University), Wayne Harbert (Cornell University), Alice Harris (Vanderbilt University), Jeffrey Heath, Michael Henderson (University of Kansas), Larry Hutchinson (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis), Ray Jackendoff (Brandeis University), Robert Johnson (Gallaudet College), Braj Kachru (University of Illinois, Urbana), Charles Kreidler (Georgetown University), William Ladusaw (University of California, Santa Cruz), Ilse Lehiste (The Ohio State University), David Lightfoot (University of Maryland), Donna Jo Napoli (Swarthmore College), Ronald Macaulay (Pitzer College), Geoffrey Pullum (University of California, Santa Cruz), Victor Raskin (Purdue University), Sanford Schane (University of California, San Diego), Carlota Smith (University of Texas, Austin), Roger Shuy (Georgetown University), and Jessica Wirth (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee).

> A story is a way to say something that can't be said any other way, and it takes every word in the story to say what the meaning is.
>
> --Flannery O'Connor (1961:96)

INTRODUCTION: THE RELATION OF LANGUAGE TO LITERATURE

Art, said Paul Klee, is exactitude winged by intuition (Klee 1925:8).[1] He was speaking, of course, from the artist's (the sender's) point of view; yet these two elements--exactitude and intuition--are the things that concern students and critics of art (the receivers) as well. As students and critics of literature, we ask these questions about a poem, novel, play, any literary work: What does it say? How does it say it? How well does it do so? The nature of literary art--exactitude winged by intuition--makes linguistics an indispensable tool in pursuing these questions.

In this essay, speaking simultaneously as a linguist and a writer of fiction and poetry, I will explore the ways in which linguistics contributes to the enterprise of understanding literature.[2] My aim is neither a survey nor a sermon, but rather to illustrate, as well as I can, a linguistic approach to literature. It is an approach representative of many, though by no means all, practitioners of linguistic stylistics. I have tried to make it accessible to two kinds of audiences: non-linguists exploring the usefulness of linguistics to literary study, and linguists interested in applications of their discipline that may be new to them.

First we will look briefly at the history of the relationship between linguistics and literary study; from there we will move to reconsider that relationship, reframing the question of what linguistics can contribute to literary study; then we will explore in detail a model that draws on current approaches to language to give students of literature--particularly in courses offered at the undergraduate level--insight into its linguistic structure.

The Tradition of Linguistics in Literary Study

In a sense, writing an essay that addresses the question of how linguistic analysis contributes to the understanding of literature is an exercise in absurdity. In what other arts do we separate the medium from the work, isolating, in Aristotelian terms, the material cause from the formal and final causes? We do not talk about the visual arts without reference to the properties and possibilities of paint and stone, chisel and charcoal; nor of dance without reference to the properties and possibilities of the human body in space. Yet the connection between medium and work is, if anything, closer for literature than for the other arts (Winner 1982:304). Considering the medium does not mean a return to the New Critical stance towards the work. Far from disregarding the effect of learning, experience, and context (both period and culture), insisting on the inseparability of language and literature necessarily takes these things fully into account. "Language," as Sapir (1921:22) put it, "is on its inner face the mold of thought." As any novelist, poet, or playwright knows only too well, the struggle to find words that fit the vision is also the struggle to free that vision from the wrong words, from unwanted tone, mood, and meaning--all the baggage that comes with a symbolic system used primarily for other purposes.

It is only since the early twentieth century that language and literature have been seen as truly separate. The Greeks and Romans wrote grammars that had as integral parts sections on prosody and other aspects of literary structure--an organization reflecting their assumption that one studied language in order to understand literature. Dionysius Thrax, for example, defined grammar as "the practical knowledge of the general usages of poets and prose writers" (Culler 1982:4). The grammars of the Middle Ages, both those describing Latin and those describing the vernacular languages, followed Greek and Roman models. In the later medieval period and the Renaissance, rhetoric--again imitating classical models--subsumed linguistics, and the study of the medium continued to be part of the study of verbal art. The pedagogical or "school" grammars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, both in England and America, followed suit. Grammars like those of Lowth (a professor of poetry at Oxford) and Priestley (an orientalist) and the immensely popular Lindley Murray (whose English Grammar adapted to the Different Classes of Learners went through at least fifty editions during the first half of the nineteenth century [Gleason 1965:71]) typically contained sections on prosody and discussions of writing and usage

drawing on the great writers of the English tradition. With the intense pursuit of the laws of linguistic change, the nineteenth century, as Culler (1982:4) points out, saw the beginning of the separation of linguistics from literary study. Modeling its explorations on the biological sciences and trading in laws, theories, and models (Stewart 1976), linguistics began to view itself as a science; this direction of development was enhanced in the first decades of our own century by the close connection between linguistics and anthropology. Literary criticism, meanwhile, pursued a direction of its own, evolving theories of literature (Russian Formalism and the Prague School, structuralism, deconstruction) designed to stand free of linguistic analysis, though they might on occasion make use of linguistic terms and concepts. The separation of the dancer from the dance was complete.

Whether the dichotomy is desirable or not, it is what we have. It is now possible--in fact, necessary--to ask the question, What can linguistics contribute to the study of literature? Before exploring in detail the various ways in which linguistic analysis illuminates literature, however, we need to define the question carefully. Objections to the use of linguistics in literary study generally respond to a poor interpretation of the question, one that confuses some functions of literary criticism with others or arrogates to linguistics functions it cannot and should not be asked to serve. Defining the question entails redefining the relation between linguistics and literary study.

(Re)defining the Relation of Linguistics to Literary Study

To see the usefulness of linguistics to literary study, we must first look at literary study itself: its goals, values, and functions. The questions pursued by the literary critic--what does the work say, how does it say it, and how well does it do so--correspond to three functions: interpretation, description, and evaluation.[3] The place of linguistics (as I will show in the following section) lies entirely within the activity of description. Linguistics offers tools (vocabulary, concepts, analytical framework and methodology) for determining how a work of literature achieves its effect. Interpretation and evaluation are activities of literary, not linguistic, analysis. They cannot be carried out without a full and accurate description of the work, which rests in part on an analysis of its language; but they have only this oblique relation to linguistics. Linguistic analysis establishes the presence of a feature and may have something to say about the effect of the feature on a reader, but leaves it to the literary critic to interpret the significance of that feature in the work of art. Thus syntactic parallellism, for example, can be correlated with very different effects in the poetry of Donne and of Plath; indeed, it should be, if linguistic analysis is doing its job.[4] Similarly, judgments of the significance of a work--its meaning in a particular culture at a particular time--and of its aesthetic merit are the

province of literary criticism proper. Linguistic analysis does not tell what a poem or a novel means (though it can tell the meaning or range of meanings of the sentences that make up the poem or novel), nor does it reveal how good a work it is. It shows how the work is made.

In broad outline, this view of the use of linguistics in understanding literature corresponds to Spitzer's philological circle. The reader or critic begins with an intuition about the work; analyzes the work to explore this intuition, modifying it in the process; and returns, with increased insight, to a contemplation of the work as a whole. This amounts to a humble claim for linguistics: its use in the service of a larger enterprise. As with other areas of applied linguistics--speech therapy, language teaching, language policy--linguistics serves its "host" discipline as a consultant, providing otherwise inaccessible information for it to act on in accordance with its own interests. In this view, linguistic competence--the speaker/hearer's internalized grammar of a language, including (as we will see) its pragmatics--is a subset of literary competence. Literary competence--which we can view as the outer envelope--contains three smaller envelopes of the same kind (each a competence): linguistic competence; pragmatics; and all the other kinds of knowledge and skill that go into understanding literature. (Often the last of these inner envelopes is also referred to as "literary competence."[5]) Linguistic analysis cannot substitute for literary competence and cannot itself fulfill the functions of literary analysis. But the humblest roles are often the indispensable ones; and so it is with the role of linguistics in literary study.

The Uses of Linguistics in the Description of Literature

Having established what linguistics cannot supply--interpretation and evaluation--we can look more closely at what it does provide. Here we need to consider two questions. First, what does the function of description comprise? And second, how does linguistics contribute to it? In describing a literary work, the critic (who wants ultimately to find correlations between its features and its effect on the reader) considers a number of things, among them genre, elements of the genre (character, plot, theme, voice, imagery, metrical form, and so on), conceptual structure, period, culture, and language. For getting at the last of these, the language of the work, linguistics provides the tools: a model of language, including a set of terms and concepts, a theoretical framework, and an analytical method.

Linguistics facilitates the description of a literary work in three ways. First, and most obviously, linguistic knowledge makes accessible literature removed from us in space or time. Without some knowledge of American English dialects, Ambrose Bierce's Gullah stories are difficult to grasp. Without a knowledge of Old English, we cannot even approach a text like Riddle 28 of the Exeter Book:

Bi þ foldan dæ el faegre ġeġierwed
mid þ̄ heardestan ond mid þ̄ scearpestan
ond mid þ̄ grymmestan gumena ġestrēona,
corfen, sworfen, ċyrred, þyrred,
bunden, wunden, blæ ċed, wæ ċed,
fraetwed, geatwed, feorran læ ded
tō durum dryhta. Drēam bi ð in innan
cwicra wihta, clenge ð, lenge ð,
þ ra þe æ r lifġende longe hwī le
wilna brūce ð ond nō wi ð spri ċe ð,
ond þonne aefter dæ þe dēman onginne ð,
meldan misli ċe. Mi ċel is tō hycganne
wī sfaestum menn, hwaet sēo wiht sȳ.

And a translation that conveys even some of the poetry of this text requires a knowledge of Old English that goes well beyond its grammar--a knowledge sophisticated enough to connect its phonology to its metrics, its morphology to its figures of speech (as with the example of the kenning discussed below), its syntax to its stylistic devices (such as variation and enumeration).[6]

Earth's one corner holds them fast:
the hardest, sharpest, grimmest of treasures.
Curved and carved, turned and burned,
bound and wound, bleached and stretched,
freighted, readied, carried from remote lands
to a lord's door. Inside, a dream
of living creatures clings and lingers.
Alive they desire, indulge, and desire,
endlessly, silently; then after death
they judge and they speak.
The wisest will find it too much to guess
what this creature might be.

Knowledge of contemporary linguistics underlies the description of literature in a second, more oblique way. Contemporary critical theory--structuralist poetics, semiotics, reader-response criticism, deconstructionism--makes frequent use of linguistic terms and concepts. Beyond this, it looks to linguistics for analogues in constructing its theories, borrowing not just terms but whole paradigms. Conceptions of narrative like those of Todorov 1977, Prince 1973, Genette 1981, Brémond 1973, and Greimas 1966 are modeled on linguistic theory, adopting the paradigm of structural or transformational linguistics and translating it into terms applicable to narrative (Stewart 1987). These theories are difficult to grasp or apply without an understanding of the linguistic theories on which they are modeled.

The third way in which a knowledge of linguistics contributes to the description of literature is in providing the tools for analyzing its language and characterizing it vis-à-vis nonliterary language and the language of other literary works. It has been argued that one can discuss literary language without the specialized vocabulary of

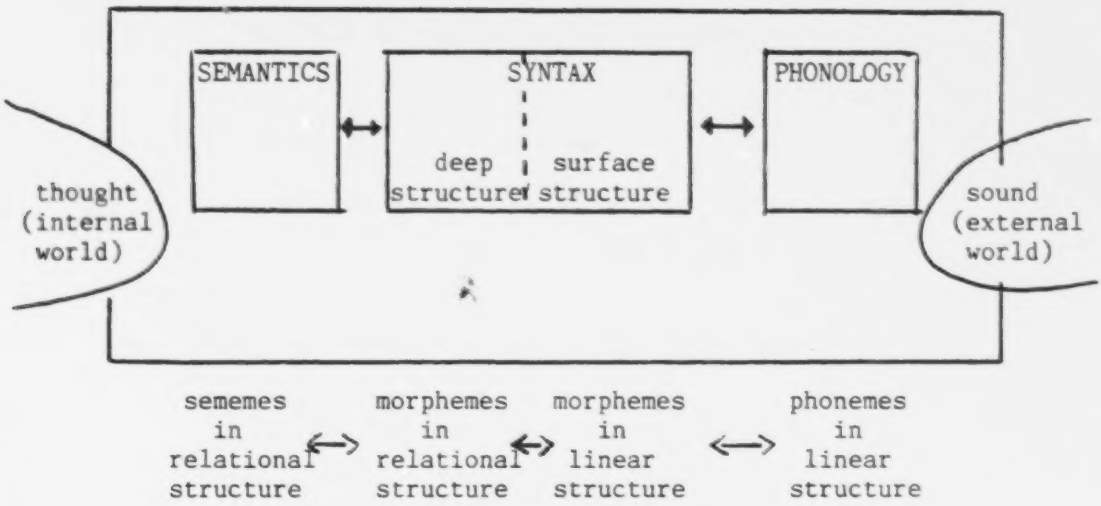
linguistics--relying on "common sense" terms like "past perfect" and "subordinate clause." But this is true only within stringent limits. Few literary scholars retain the full vocabulary of the pedagogical grammar they learned in the eighth grade. (Define the nominative absolute, for example; or illustrate the difference between a gerund and gerundive.) But even if they did, there would remain several serious drawbacks. This framework cannot be relied on to convey one's analysis accurately to other critics or to readers, since its vocabulary is not standardized; it rests on no underlying theory of language and linguistic behavior linking grammatical observations with communicative intent and effect; it does not go beyond the level of the sentence, so textual characteristics--features of larger stretches of discourse--escape its net altogether. These drawbacks are the more serious in that they cut across the very nature of literature, which is communicative and textual, and of literary criticism, which--through what Iser (1984:389) defines as "basically a cognitive act designed to tackle something noncognitive in nature"--strives to make the work of art accessible, not to mystify the reader further.

By contrast, contemporary linguistics offfers the student of literature a choice of descriptive vocabularies that are precise and rich, with underlying theories that inform the analytical procedures and models of language extending beyond the sentence to span the whole text. By way of illustration, we will look first at applications of linguistics to literary language at the level of the sentence and below inside what linguists generally view as the grammar proper--and then at textual structure.

THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE: INSIDE THE GRAMMAR

The model of language most frequently used in analyzing literature at the level of the senctnece and below is a hybrid, and a variable one at that. In a decade and a half of practicing linguistic stylistics and teaching linguistics to students of literature, I have found that the model presented here--updated, augmented, and refined over the years--best serves the central purpose of linguistic stylistics, which is to illuminate the literary text. To this purpose everything else takes second place. Thus the model presented here (so eclectic as possibly to horrify theoretical linguists loyal to a single paradigm) combines the "classical" transformational grammar of Chomsky's Aspects (1965) with a version of case grammar originated by Fillmore (1968) and later modified by Halliday (1979, 1985) and others.

At the level of the sentence and below, language is viewed as having three components--phonology, syntax, and semantics--each of which consists of distinctive elements and rules for their arrangement. The grammar looks roughly like this (Moulton 1970:2-3 and personal communication):



Why this apparatus? It accounts for the amazing phenomenon of human communication, which transfers a multidimensional image (or proposition, if you will) from one mind to another. The message itself is of a different shape altogether, cast in a form that is one-dimensional, a linear sequence of phonemes conveying a linear sequence of morphemes. The grammar breaks down the magic into a sequence of steps which the sender (or encoder) of a message follows from left to right and the receiver (or decoder) follows from right to left. It allows us to conceive of the sender as beginning with a complex multidimensional conceptual structure and funnelling it into a one-dimensional string of sounds; of the receiver as reversing the process to arrive at more or less the original image. The grammar, then, is a device for pairing two quite discrepant things: sound and meaning. The difficulty of passing from one to the other without accident (either on the part of the sender or on the part of the receiver) lies at the heart of human language.

Literature, as writers are well aware, inherits this tension, this difficulty. "The construction of anything," says Paul Scott (1987:105), author of The Jewel in the Crown, "is controlled by the characteristics and properties of the material available." (Material cause and formal cause.) In a literary work, the difficulty is compounded by the fact that the reader interacts creatively with the writer in (re)constructing the image (Scott, 113-114; Iser 1978). The whole encoding/decoding collaboration must occur all over again in the realm of literary competence, the outer envelope: to "decode" a novel or a poem, as with any work of art, is to have an experience (Dewey 1934). But asking the question, How does the work say what it says--how does it create the reader's experience--means dealing first with the inner envelope, looking at the material of which the work is made.

Phonology

Understanding the phonological structure of language illuminates a wide range of literary elements: sound patterning (assonance, consonance, alliteration, and more subtle patterns that rely on relations between acoustic features or classes of sounds), sound symbolism, meter, prose rhythm, tone, dialect.[7] Consider Robert Frost's "Come In," for example.

As I came to the edge of the woods,
Thrush music--hark!
Now if it was dusk outside,
Inside it was dark.

Too dark in the woods for a bird
By sleight of wing
To better its perch for the night,
Though it still could sing.

The last of the light of the sun
That had died in the west
Still lived for one song more
In a thrush's breast.

Far in the pillared dark
Thrush music went--
Almost like a call to come in
To the dark and lament.

But no, I was out for stars:
I would not come in.
I meant not even if asked,
And I hadn't been.

Sound patterning in the poem involves the alternation of sequences of liquids (l, r) and nasals (m,n) with sequences of stops or consonant clusters (b, t, d, k, st-). The effect is a sort of rocking motion--the liquid and nasal resonants push the line along, while the stops (true to their name) periodically stop it. This effect is matched by the meter--alternating anapests and iambs in very short lines--which mimics the rhythm of the thrush's call. Sound pattern and meter converge with syntax to draw attention to figurative and structural devices in the poem. The chiasmus of dusk...inside, outside...dark (ll. 3-4), for instance, is heightened by the repeated [d--k] sequence bracketing it at either end and the slant rhyme linking the two inner elements--both of these repetitions neatly counterpointing phonetic similarity against semantic oppositeness; meanwhile, meter splits the chiasmus into its two halves. The most prominent halt in the poem's progress occurs exactly at its center:

The last of the light of the sun
That had died in the west
Still lived for one song more
In a thrush's breast.

Here the cluster [stst] brings the poem to a brief, breathless pause, like a horse jumping over a hurdle. At the center of the poem, it is also at the center of the most explicit expression of the poem's theme: carrying on (the thrush sings past nightfall, the speaker does not come in).

Contrasting Frost's poem with the following lines from Philip James Bailey's Festus (a poem of some 400 pages which went through more than fifteen American editions from 1845 on) illustrates both the usefulness and the limits of linguistic analysis.

I saw the tears start in her eye,
And trickle down her cheek;
Like falling stars across the sky
Escaping from their Maker's eye:
I saw but spared to speak.

Here we find sound patterning very close to that of Frost's poem, but used to opposite effect. The repeated stops that interrupt the smooth course of the resonants evoke a feeling at odds with the subject, so that we picture tears spurting ludicrously, the grief of someone in a comic strip. The linked clusters across a line boundary ("sky Escaping"), like Frost's, halt the poem's progress; but, unlike Frost's, the pause does not reinforce the theme. Instead, the awkwardness of the sound enhances the grotesqueness of the image (the sky as God's eye, the stars as tears--the scale is that of a Warhol painting); and we are not surprised to encounter, in the next line, alliteration that is merely silly.

By now, of course, we have crossed the boundary between description and interpretation, since without understanding the poem we could not assess the fit between sound-pattern and theme. And in making a judgment about the fit, we have crossed the boundary between description and evaluation, as well. However, it is linguistic analysis that first discloses the phonological structure of both poems and correlates that structure with effects in the reader--the information that underlies our interpretation and evaluation. The modest but indispensable function currently claimed for linguistic stylistics (Fowler 1977, Leech and Short 1981) is just this: not sufficient, but necessary. Without crossing the boundaries, we could not have closed Spitzer's circle by returning to our original intuition of the poem's meaning, and so could not have said much of interest about the poem as a work of art. Without analyzing the sound structure of the poems, the interesting things we did say would have lacked exactitude; they would not have been grounded in observable features of the work.

Surface Syntax

In discussing the syntactic analysis of literary language, we will split the syntactic component of the grammar in half, grouping surface syntax with morphology, deep syntax with semantics. The first pair involves structures we can observe--they are right there on the surface of the sentence; the second involves structures we must infer. The range of surface syntactic applications to literature is considerably wider than that of phonological applications. For both prose and poetry, we find studies of individual works as well as studies that characterize the styles of individual writers, compare the styles of writers or schools or periods, and define varieties or levels of style.[8]

On the level of morphology and syntax, most studies take one of two positions toward the relation between literary language and ordinary language (Traugott and Pratt 1980:33). The first views literary language as a subset of the language available to the ordinary speaker/hearer--as choices from among the options offered by the grammar as a whole. The second views literary language as unlike ordinary language, characterizing it in terms of deviations from ordinary usage. Both views--deviance and choice--are useful; and often both are required in analyzing the style of a single writer or a single work. In fact, it is well to see deviance and choice as ends of a continuum. Isn't there a "tipping point" at which choice of a perfectly grammatical construction creates language so unacceptable that it really is deviant? (Consider the sentence, Because because because he kissed her she hit him he cried she relented, which embeds a grammatical clause structure inside itself to the point where it becomes difficult to decode [after Yngve 1960:452].) And isn't there a lower bound beyond which deviance is so quiet that it appears as merely an eccentric choice? (Consider utterances like But me no buts or [from an experienced poker player] Chest your cards.)

E. E. Cummings' poetry provides many illustrations of the interplay between deviance and choice on the level of morphology and syntax, as in "It's over a (see Just":

> It's over a (see just
> over this) wall
> the apples are (yes
> they're gravensteins) all
> as red as to lose
> and as round as to find.
>
> Each why of a leaf says
> (floating each how)
> you're which as to die
> (each green of a new)
> you're who as to grow
> but you're he as to do

what must (whispers) be must
be (the wise fool)
if living's to steal--
five wishes are five
and one hand is a mind

then over our thief goes
(you go and i)
has pulled (for he's w:)
such fruit from what bough
that someone called they
made him pay with his now.

But over a (see just
over this) wall
the red and the round
(they're gravenstiens) fall
with a kind of a blind
big sound on the ground

The poem repeatedly substitutes another part of speech for the one required by the syntax: verbs for nouns (to lose, to find, die, etc.);adverbs (why, how, now) for nouns; adjectives for nouns (green, new, round, etc.). This is patterned, not random, deviance. The target class is always nouns; the source classes are limited to three. Moreover, it is a departure sanctioned by the grammar. Functional shift (the use of a word as different parts of speech without changing its form, so that cut, for example, can be a verb, a noun, or an adjective) is a highly productive morphological device in English.

But the most interesting thing about the language of this poem is Cummings' use of what Mukařovský (1967) calls "foregrounding." In its broadest sense the essence of all art (Winner 1982:28-31), foregrounding results from the artist's endeavor to break new ground. It focuses the receiver's attention on the medium, fulfilling what Jakobson (1967) has called the "poetic function." Because of their unexpectedness, foregrounded elements stand out from the rest of the work and claim the reader's attention. Deviation from the grammar of ordinary language, as in Cummings' poem, always foregrounds a construction. But Cummings goes this one better: by establishing a pattern, he makes the reader expect a particular kind of deviance--the use of adjectives as verbs--and then he deviates from that pattern by reverting to ordinary usage. Coming to the lines

with a kind of a blind
big sound on the ground

the reader at first construes blind as an adjective-turned-noun, but then, reading on, is forced to reconstrue it as a true adjective. This doubletake, by focusing the reader's attention on the language, slows the poem down and strengthens its ending.

Deep Syntax and Semantics

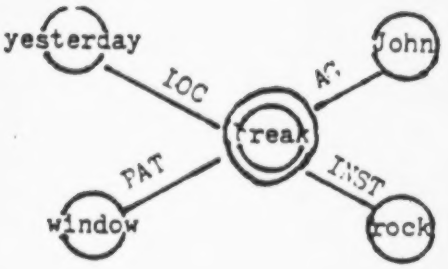
Because it is the component of the grammar closest to cognition itself, semantics is notoriously the most complex aspect of language and the most difficult for linguistic theory to capture. Janet Dean Fodor (1977:104) likens the effort to trying to reconstruct "a whole dinosaur through the odd shinbone." But despite the fact that semantic theory is in a state of some disarray (see Fodor 1977, Kempson 1977, Lyons 1977), it has been applied to literary language with considerable success.[9] The two most useful approaches are through semantic features and through role relation analysis.

Semantic features allow a precise characterization of metaphor and at the same time locate it relative to the grammar of ordinary language. Expressions like a grief ago and seven oceans answer from their dream depart from the grammar by violating selectional restrictions--collocating words whose semantic features clash. A grief ago pairs a noun that has the feature <-Time> with a context that requires <+Time> (Levin 1967:228); seven oceans answer pairs a subject that is <-Human> with a verb requiring a <+Human> agent. A linguistic perspective lets us see why metaphor, more than any other figure of speech, strikes us as characteristic of verbal art: because it deviates from the grammar of ordinary language, metaphor is always foregrounded.

Role relation analysis applies to the structure of the proposition underlying a sentence. The verb is viewed as central; the other elements in the sentences are its arguments, connected to it by labelled relations:[10]

- AGENT/FORCE — animate or inanimate entity responsible for action
- PATIENT — person or thing affected by action
- EXPERIENCER — animate being experiencing or receiving action (traditionally, the dative case)
- LOCATION — location in space or time (adverbial), including possession (the genitive)
- INSTRUMENT — inanimate means by which action is accomplished
- PATH — place or direction something comes to, from, or through

The sentence Yesterday John broke the window with a rock, for example, deploys its four noun phrases in the relations of Location, Agent, Patient, and Instrument, with respect to the central action of the verb. We can represent the relational structure of the sentence, following Halliday (1979), as



Now let us take a passage from Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms, in which role labels appear underneath the nouns or noun phrases.[11]

In the late summer of that year we lived in a house in a village that
LOC LOC PAT LOC LOC

looked across the river and the plain to the mountains. In the bed of
PATH PATH LOC

the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun,
LOC PAT LOC

and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels.
PAT LOC

Troops went by the house and down the road and the dust they raised
AG/PAT PATH PATH AG//PAT AG

powdered the leaves of the trees. The trunks of the trees too were
LOC LOC PAT LOC

dusty and the leaves fell early that year and we saw the troops
AG/PAT LOC EXP PAT & AG/PAT

marching along the road and the dust rising and leaves, stirred by
PATH PAT & AG/PAT PAT & AG/PAT

the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road
AG(FC) PAT & AG/PAT PAT & PAT

bare and white except for the leaves.
PAT(?)

Under a role relation analysis the passage comes clear, we can account for, flesh out, and articulate our initial intuition about the passage: an oxymoronic sense of uneventful action, recounted by a puzzlingly elusive narrator. Simply establishing the ratio of static case roles (Patient, Location, Path) to dynamic ones (Agent, Instrument) shows how the language of the passage communicates a silent passivity though it describes action and movement. With one

exception, the few active roles that occur are half of an active/inactive hybrid: troops, leaves, dust, soldiers are all simultaneously Agent and Patient, either because they are the subject of verbs of motion or because (filling two roles at the level of deep structure) they are objects of the narrator's perception as well as subjects of their respective verbs. Then there is the elusive narrator. The narrative voice presents itself only in the nonactive roles of Patient (we lived) or Experiencer (we saw). The narrator is a tenuous presence--an entity that can experience or undergo but not act.

At all three levels of linguistic structure--phonological, syntactic, and semantic--we began with an intuitive grasp of the work, analyzed its language, and returned to our starting point with an increased understanding of the work. The concepts of linguistics let us see our intuition in more detail, fleshed out in terms of the material of which the work is made; its terminology lets us communicate that increased understanding fully and precisely. Now we will look at conceptions of language that move beyond the confines of the individual sentence.

THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE: BEYOND THE GRAMMAR

Developments of the last fifteen years or so in linguistic theory have had the cumulative effect of enlarging the three-part grammar we have been looking at. The result is a conception of language "stretched" two ways. Text-linguistics or discourse analysis stretches the grammar to accommodate utterances larger than a single sentence; sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics stretch the grammar to include within its compass the speaker and hearer--their shared knowledge and assumptions that contribute to interpreting the message. Clearly this two-way widening of the grammar suits the purposes of literary study, which by definition focuses on texts and concerns itself with interpretation.

Text-Linguistics and Discourse Analysis

Systemic-functional grammar--in my experience, the model of language most useful for analyzing literature--extends the grammar described above to encompass the textual dimension of language (Halliday 1979, 1985). A text is created by means of cohesion and information structure. Cohesion comprises the linguistic features that link sentences into a whole: anaphora, substitution, ellipsis, lexical repetition, and transitional adverbs (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Information structure comprises the aspects of sentence structure that select from and order the propositional raw material: the concepts of topic/comment (or theme/rheme) given/new information,

and shared/unshared information (Halliday 1979). Spanning a collection of sentences, cohesion and information structure create the unity that makes them a text.

Looking again at the opening passage from A Farewell to Arms, we can trace the creation of a unified text that is more than the sum of its sentences. Lexical repetition gives the passage a high degree of cohesion: the water, the troops, the dust, the leaves, evoked and re-evoked in an almost incantatory fashion, make the text circle back to where it began, just as the passing of the troops ultimately returns us to the empty landscape. The helicopter effect--hovering over a scene--intensifies the feeling of motion-in-stillness established on the semantic level by the manipulation of role relations. The elusiveness of the narrator is also intensified on the textual level; information is structured in a way that positions the reader close to the narrator's consciousness. Demonstrative and definite article create a sense of shared information. "In the late summer of that year," the passage begins; and the reader is instantly inside the world of the novel. "The river," "the plain," "the mountains" paint a landscape already familiar, part of a world the reader shares with the narrator. The bare pronoun we, unadorned by any explanatory reference and ambiguously including the reader (is it "I and others" or "you and I"?), draws the reader further in. And so by the end of the first sentence the reader has been co-opted. The rest of the passage builds on the devices of the opening. The dense tissue of definite articles creates layers of shared referents (not only the river, the plain, the mountains, but also the troops, the trees, the leaves, the road). The bare pronoun continues as the only sign of the narrator's presence, minimizing as much as possible the distance between teller and listener.

Literary applications of text-linguistics and discourse analysis, which have tended to focus on prose fiction, testify that they provide a realistic way of looking at language. They bring us closer to language as speaker/hearers actually use it--not in isolated, careful sentences, but in larger, sometimes sprawling stretches of text.[12] Sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics are realistic in another way: they take into account the behavior, as well as the utterances, of actual speaker/hearers in the act of communicating.

Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, and Pragmatics

Taken together, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics look at language behavior--how speaker/hearers use the grammar to communicate with each other. Here we are dealing with both the production and the interpretation of utterances. We need, therefore, to consider resources shared by speakers of a language beyond the grammar (both of individual sentences and of texts): interpretive conventions (speech act theory and pragmatics); expressive or paralinguistic phenomena like register, key, and delivery; the shared assumptions, norms, and beliefs of the culture;

cognitive constraints and strategies.[13] Because these concerns propel linguistics out into the territory of psychology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, hybrid subdisciplines have sprung up--as the very terms "psycholinguistics" and "sociolinguistics" reflect.

As with other aspects of language, it is impossible to do justice here to the depth and breadth of literary applications that sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics afford. A sampling would include: dialogue and other embedded speech in narrative fiction; dramatic exchanges, both verbal and non-verbal; marginal or problematical genres (oral narrative, the literary riddle, and vernacular art forms such as the "dozens" and greeting cards); current issues in critical theory (the structure of narrative, the validity of reader-response criticism, the relation between author and reader).[14]

If current linguistic theory's stretching of the grammar evokes in literary critics a feeling of plus ça change--Keir Elam (1984:193), for example, notes the similarity of Grice's maxims to principles of discourse articulated in the Renaissance--that is not surprising. Both of the directions taken by current linguistic theory widen the grammar to encompass aspects of communication once the province of rhetoric. Like rhetoric, text-linguistics and discourse analysis look at structure on a large scale; like rhetoric, the hybrid subdisciplines of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics focus on how language achieves effects and elicits responses. Perhaps linguistics is moving in a direction that will eventually reunite the study of language and the study of literature? In any case, one consequence of current disciplinary crossover--an important one for literary study--has been to keep linguistics from the narrowness and abstraction inherent in focusing exclusively on the structure of the sentence in isolation. For literary study, this means less need to fear reductionism. The possibility that, in taking apart the language of a literary work, "we murder to dissect"--reducing a poem or novel to a rubble heap of phonemes and morphemes--is countered by the essentially centrifugal force of the need to account for how speakers communicate.

CONCLUSION

There is no single approach to literature, says Richmond Lattimore. Rather, "the inner form is alive and various. To try to recognize and re-enact these forms is to enjoy the closest communication with the subject" (1958:147-8). Linguistics gives the student of literature an analytical tool the sole purpose of which is to describe faithfully the workings of language. It provides a theoretical framework, an analytical method, and a vocabulary for communicating its insights that are all designed to serve concerns other than literary interpretation and evaluation--that are all, as linguists say, independently motivated. Linguistic analysis is therefore another "way into" the literary work, an independent point of entry.

The reader who approaches a literary work through its language meets it on its own ground, understanding the materials from which it is made, able to see its artistry against the background of what those materials allow, facilitate, preclude. Linguistic analysis imposes a measure of objectivity, a check on the reader's initial intuition; it provides the means for articulating that intuition; it functions heuristically, suggesting directions to explore. The figure linguistic analysis makes is the mirror image of the figure a poem makes. The reader who follows Spitzer's circle--moving from an initial intuition of the work through an analysis of its language to arrive a deeper understanding of the work--reverses the process by which the work of art is made. That reader or critic--that student of literature--grasps the poem or play or novel through intuition winged by exactitude.

NOTES

[1]I am grateful to the following scholars for comments and discussion: Catherine V. Chvany, Sam Driver, Bruce A. Rosenberg; any errors of course are mine.

[2]My poetry and short stories (which have won two national awards) have appeared in the Chicago Tribune, The Southern Review, Ascent, Crosscurrents, Kansas Quarterly, and elsewhere.

[3]On defining the functions of criticism, see Adams 1971 (Preface), Austin 1984, Fowler 1981, Gombrich 1984, Hirsch 1976, Iser 1984, Steinmann 1975.

[4]The charge of inconsistency leveled by Mair (1985:123-4) against Cummings and Simmons 1983 is groundless if we take an instrumental view of the function of linguistic analysis within literary criticism; and it is unfounded even by Mair's own standards, since different periods and cultures create different contexts.

[5]When Culler (1975:18-20) defines literary competence as the set of conventions for reading literary texts shared by author and reader, he is using the term to refer only to the third of these smaller envelopes. Like Culler, Schauber and Spolsky (1986:20) list literary competence as one of three components--linguistic competence (a "Chomskyan autonomous grammar"), pragmatics, and literary competence--that make up the reader's necessary resources in approaching literature; however, they then go on to use the term "literary competence" to comprise all three of these components operating together. Implicit or explicit modeling of literary competence on linguistic competence has tended to further confuse the two, and the inadequacy of attempted formalizations of literary competence then appears to reflect badly on linguistic stylistics. But the existence, nature, and function of literary competence constitute a separate issue from that of the usefulness of linguistics to literary study.

[6]Chvany 1986--in effect a protocol analysis of the literary translation process--illustrates vividly the complexities involved; see also her essay in this volume on linguistics and translation.

[7]For phonology, as for the other levels of linguistic structure discussed here, to list all the worthwhile applications would be impossible; in each case, my suggestions are limited to studies easily accessible in anthologies or to book-length works. For phonology, a few such applications are those in Chatman and Levin 1967 (the sections on "sound texture" and metrics), Sebeok 1960 (the section on metrics), Freeman 1970 (the section on metrics); Halle & Keyser 1971. Phonological treatments of prose are fewer: see, for example, Wexler's essay on Corneille and Racine (in Fowler 1966), Lodge 1966, Page 1973, Crystal 1975.

[8]Some classic studies accessible in anthologies are Francis'

unraveling of a Dylan Thomas poem (Chatman and Levin 1967), Miles' account of English poetic styles (Chatman and Levin 1967), Wells' "Nominal and Verbal Style" (Sebeok 1960), Brown and Gilman's "Pronouns of Power and Solidarity" (Sebeok 1960), Hayes' comparison of Gibbon and Hemingway (Freeman 1970), Milic's analysis of Swift (Freeman 1970), Dillon's "Inversions and Deletions in English Poetry" (Ching et al. 1980), Sinclair's "Taking a Poem to Pieces" (Fowler 1966). Book-length studies of prose fiction with illuminating discussions of morphology and syntax include Fowler 1977, Lodge 1966, Leech and Short 1981. See also Cluysenaar 1976, Epstein 1978, Cummings and Simmons 1983.

[9]Not only individual instances of metaphor have been illuminated in this way (for example, Levin 1967, Leech 1969, Lunsford's study of Byron [Ching et al. 1980], Thorne [Freeman 1970]), but also metaphor in general (Jakobson 1960, Levin 1977, Bickerton [Ching et al. 1980]) and related figures of speech like the kenning (Stewart 1979) and metonymy (Jakobson and Halle 1956).

[10]The approach to deep structure illustrated here is essentially a case grammar approach. Two versions of role relational analysis useful for literary study are Halliday 1985 and Traugott and Pratt 1980; they differ as to the number and nature of roles. The inventory of labelled relations used here, adapted from William G. Moulton's (personal communication), is the one I have found most useful.

[11]Traugott and Pratt (1980:223) suggest this passage as a good prospect for role relational analysis; they analyze only the first sentence, using somewhat different labels from the ones given here.

[12]Some literary applications of text-linguistics or discourse analysis are Halliday's analysis of Golding's "The Inheritors" (Chatman 1971), Leech and Short 1981, Fowler 1977, Hasan 1985, and essays in Chafe 1980 and Carter 1982. Formulations of text-linguistics and discourse analysis other than Halliday's include Van Dijk 1977, Van Dijk and Kintsch 1983, Coulthardt 1977, Hopper and Thompson 1980.

[13]On interpretive conventions, see, for example, Austin 1962, Searle 1975a, Gazdar 1979, Levinson 1983, Grice 1975; on expressive or paralinguistic phenomena, see Joos 1967, Halliday 1985, Hymes 1974, Goffman 1974, 1981; on the shared assumptions, norms, and beliefs of the culture, see Hymes 1974, Labov 1972a, Romaine 1982; on cognitive constraints and strategies, see Clark and Clark 1977, Miller and Johnson-Laird 1976.

[14]Examples of the literary application of sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and pragmatics are the following: for dialogue and other embedded speech in narrative, Page 1973, McHale 1978, Banfield 1982; for drama, Burton 1980 and remarks in Clark and Carlson 1982; for marginal or problematical genres, Labov 1972b, some

of the essays in Chafe 1980 on oral narrative, Stewart 1983 on the literary riddle, Labov 1973 and Smith 1978 on vernacular art forms. Current issues in critical theory include, among others, the structure of narrative (Pratt 1977, Chatman the validity of reader-response criticism (Kintgen 1976, Fish 1980) and the relation between author and reader (Searle 1975b, Fowler 1981, Prince 1982, Chatman 1980, Dillon 1986, Porter 1986).

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